IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A hitch assembly for mounting to a frame assembly of a vehicle, comprising:

a hitch mounting structure formed from an elongated body that is bent into a general U-shape having opposing end portions and a centrally disposed intermediate portion between the end portions; and

a hitch receiver mounted to the intermediate portion of the hitch mounting structure,

wherein the end portions each include a mounting section with a general L-shaped cross-sectional configuration, thereby providing the end portions with horizontally extending mounting flanges structured to mount the hitch assembly to the frame assembly of the vehicle, and

wherein the centrally disposed intermediate portion has a tubular cross-section.

2. (Original) A hitch assembly according to claim 1, wherein the hitch mounting structure is formed from a substantially tubular body member having a generally rectangular cross-section.

3. (Original) A hitch assembly according to claim 1, wherein the intermediate portion of the hitch mounting structure has a generally rectangular cross-sectional configuration.

4. (Original) A hitch assembly according to claim 1, wherein the end portions include an elbow section with a general U-shaped cross-sectional configuration.

5. (Original) A hitch assembly according to claim 1, wherein each of the horizontally extending mounting flanges include a plurality of openings for mounting the hitch assembly to the frame assembly of the vehicle.

6. (Original) A hitch assembly according to claim 1, wherein the intermediate portion of the hitch mounting structure includes an opening structured to mount the hitch receiver.

7. (Original) A hitch assembly according to claim 6, wherein the intermediate portion has a general V-shape such that the end portions are positioned higher than the opening in the intermediate portion.

8-34. (Canceled).

35. (Currently Amended) A retractable hitch assembly for mounting to a frame assembly of a vehicle, comprising:

a hitch mounting structure with end portions and a centrally disposed intermediate portion between the end portions, the end portions each including an elbow section with a general U-shaped cross-sectional configuration, the end portions structured to rigidly mount the retractable hitch assembly to the frame assembly of the vehicle; and

a retractable hitch mechanism rigidly mounted to the hitch mounting structure, the retractable hitch mechanism including:

an outer hitch receiver mounted to the intermediate portion of the hitch mounting structure;

an inner hitch receiver telescopically mounted within the outer hitch receiver for sliding movement with respect to the outer hitch receiver between an extended position and a retracted position;

a reversible electric motor; and

a gear arrangement operatively mounted between the reversible electric motor and the inner hitch receiver,

wherein the reversible electric motor is electrically actuated to selectively drive the inner hitch receiver with respect to the outer hitch receiver via the gear arrangement between the extended and retracted positions thereof.

36. (Previously Presented) A retractable hitch assembly according to claim 35, wherein the hitch mounting structure is formed from an elongated body that is bent into a structure having a general U-shape.

37. (Original) A retractable hitch assembly according to claim 36, wherein the end portions each include a mounting section with a general L-shaped cross-sectional configuration, thereby providing the end portions with horizontally extending mounting flanges structured to mount the hitch assembly to the frame assembly of the vehicle.

38. (Canceled)

39. (Original) A retractable hitch assembly according to claim 36, wherein the hitch mounting structure is formed from a substantially tubular body member having a generally rectangular cross-section.

40. (Original) A retractable hitch assembly according to claim 36, wherein the intermediate portion of the hitch mounting structure has a generally rectangular cross-sectional configuration.

41. (Canceled).

42. (Original) A retractable hitch assembly according to claim 35, wherein the intermediate portion of the hitch mounting structure includes an opening structured to mount the outer hitch receiver.

43. (Original) A retractable hitch assembly according to claim 42, wherein the intermediate portion has a general V-shape such that the end portions are positioned higher than the opening in the intermediate portion.

44. (Original) A retractable hitch assembly according to claim 35, wherein the inner hitch receiver include a receiver ring on one end thereof.

45. (Original) A retractable hitch assembly according to claim 35, wherein the gear arrangement is a rack and pinion gear arrangement, the rack and pinion gear arrangement including a pinion gear provided on an output shaft of the reversible electric motor and a rack provided on a side wall of the inner hitch receiver.

46. (Original) A retractable hitch assembly according to claim 35, further comprising a locking assembly to lock the inner hitch receiver in the extended position thereof.

47. (Previously Presented) A retractable hitch assembly for mounting to a frame assembly of a vehicle, comprising:

a hitch mounting structure with end portions and a centrally disposed intermediate portion between the end portions, the end portions structured to mount the retractable hitch assembly to the frame assembly of the vehicle;

a retractable hitch mechanism securely mounted to the hitch mounting structure, the retractable hitch mechanism including:

an outer hitch receiver mounted to the intermediate portion of the hitch mounting structure;

an inner hitch receiver telescopically mounted within the outer hitch receiver for sliding movement with respect to the outer hitch receiver between an extended position and a retracted position;

a reversible electric motor; and

a gear arrangement operatively mounted between the reversible electric motor and the inner hitch receiver,

wherein the reversible electric motor is electrically actuated to selectively drive the inner hitch receiver with respect to the outer hitch receiver via the gear arrangement between the extended and retracted positions thereof; and

a locking assembly to lock the inner hitch receiver in the extended position thereof, wherein the locking assembly includes a solenoid having a drive shaft that is movable between extended and retracted positions and a locking pin rigidly mounted to the drive shaft so as to move with the drive shaft between extended and retracted positions, the solenoid being electrically connected to the reversible electric motor such that the solenoid is actuated when the inner hitch receiver reaches the extended position so as to move the locking pin from the retracted position into the extended position wherein the locking pin operatively engages the inner hitch receiver to lock the inner hitch receiver with respect to the outer hitch receiver.

48. (Previously Presented) The hitch assembly according to claim 4, wherein the elbow sections extend from their respective end portions to the centrally disposed intermediate portion.

49. (Previously Presented) The hitch assembly according to claim 41, wherein the elbow sections extend from their respective end portions to the centrally disposed intermediate portion.

50. (Previously Presented) The hitch assembly of claim 1, wherein:

the elongated body comprises an elongated substantially tubular body member, and

the mounting sections each comprise a portion of the elongated substantially tubular body member that is bent into the general L-shaped cross-sectional configuration.

51. (Previously Presented) The hitch assembly of claim 4, wherein bent portions of the elongated body define the elbow sections.

52. (Previously Presented) The hitch assembly of claim 4, wherein:

the elongated body comprises a substantially tubular body member, and

the elbow sections each comprise a portion of the substantially tubular body member that is bent into the general U-shaped cross-sectional configuration.

53. (Previously Presented) A hitch assembly for mounting to a frame assembly of a vehicle, comprising:

a hitch mounting structure formed from an elongated substantially tubular body that is bent into a general U-shape having opposing end portions and a centrally disposed intermediate portion between the end portions, the end portions each including an elbow section with a general U-shaped cross-sectional configuration; and

a hitch receiver mounted to the intermediate portion of the hitch mounting structure,

wherein the end portions each include a mounting section with a horizontally extending mounting flange structured to mount the hitch assembly to the frame assembly of the vehicle.

54. (Previously Presented) The hitch assembly of claim 53, wherein each mounting section includes a general L-shaped cross-sectional configuration, wherein the L-shaped cross-sectional configuration provides the horizontally extending mounting flange.

55. (Previously Presented) The hitch assembly of claim 54, wherein the mounting sections each comprise a portion of the elongated substantially tubular body that is bent into the general L-shaped cross-sectional configuration.

56. (Previously Presented) A hitch assembly according to claim 53, wherein bent portions of the elongated substantially tubular body define the elbow sections.

57. (New) A hitch assembly according to claim 53, wherein the intermediate portion has a tubular cross-section.